



Tionól Reigiúnach Oirthir agus Lár-Tíre Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly

3ú Urlár ó Thuaidh | Ionad Cathartha | An tSráid Mhór | Baile Munna | Baile Átha Cliath 9
3rd Floor North | Ballymun Civic Centre | Main Street | Ballymun | Dublin 9



Rail Freight 2040 Strategy - Design

Introduction

The Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly (EMRA) is part of the regional tier of governance in Ireland. It is focused on the formulation, adoption and implementation of the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES), oversight and coordination of Local Economic and Community Plans, management of EU Operational Programs, EU project participation, implementation of national economic policy and additional functions working with the National Oversight and Audit Commission.

In line with the provisions of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly (EMRA) made the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy (RSES) for the Eastern and Midland Region on the 28th June 2019. The primary statutory objective of the RSES is to support implementation of Project Ireland 2040 – which links planning and investment through the National Planning Framework (NPF) and ten-year National Development Plan (NDP) – and the economic and climate policies of the Government by providing a long-term strategic planning and economic framework for the Region.

The adoption of the RSES sets the context for each local authority to review their development plans to ensure consistency with the NPF and RSES regarding a number of matters including; promoting regional development; planning for the best use of land having regard to location, scale and density of new development to benefit from investment of public funds in transport infrastructure and public transport services; integrated planning for transport and land use, and the promotion of sustainable transportation strategies in urban and rural areas, including measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to climate change.

Submission

The opportunities to strengthen rail freight through the region is recognised and supported by the Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly's (EMRA) Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy, specifically;

RPO 8.5 To support the preparation of a regional strategy for freight transport in collaboration with the relevant transport agencies and other Assemblies.

A Regional Freight Strategy can address rail network assets, future potential and address the issue of potential regional and national hubs for the transport of freight by rail.

Both the EMRA and Southern Regional Assembly's RSEs include an RPO promoting the preparation of a regional strategy for freight transport.

Q1. What advantages do you consider that the development of rail freight services would bring to your area and communities?

The advantages available through the development of rail freight services include cost savings and reliability for businesses using the service and improved environmental performance that benefits local communities and the environment. It can be cheaper for companies to use railways to move goods rather than on the road network. It can therefore allow some businesses explore opportunities to expand their reach in providing goods and services in a cost-efficient manner. Rail freight can also provide timetabled services with a high level of reliability and efficiency in its ability to move hundreds of tonnes of freight in a single train load.

In environmental terms it is better for local communities as there is associated less visual and noise pollution – with lower GHG emissions and reduced motorway congestion, and fewer heavy goods vehicles going through villages and towns means roads are safer for all users including pedestrians. Railways are generally segregated from residential areas. Rail transport would also have a better safety record than road haulage.

Q2. Are there aspects of Iarnród Éireann freight business which could be improved, and which would make rail freight a more attractive proposition to your communities? Please explain.

Visibility and marketing. The opportunities for rail freight transport are not widely understood or promoted nationally.

Q3. What aspects of rail freight would be important to you in supporting the development of rail freight services? E.g. port access, environmental considerations, frequency, cost etc.

The RSES recognises that the sustainable growth of the Region requires the provision of services and infrastructure in a plan led manner to ensure that there is adequate capacity to support future development. In particular, the RSES emphasises that infrastructure to deliver better connected services is vital to our continued growth, supporting businesses and enhancing our communities.

The NPF recognises the need to improve land transport connections to the major ports and airports and protect the strategic function of the key transport corridors. National Ports Policy highlights the potential of the port network to offer multi-modal distribution networks. It seeks to ensure that the strategic development requirements of Tier 1 Ports, ports of regional significance and smaller harbours are addressed to ensure their effective growth and sustainable development at a national and regional level. Dublin Port is recognised in the RSES as a critical national facility, a key economic driver for the region and the nation. RPO 8.21 supports the role of Dublin Port as a Port of National Significance (Tier 1) and its continued commercial development. RPO 8.22 supports ports of Regional Significance (such as Drogheda, Dundalk, Dun Laoghaire, Howth, Greenore and Wicklow) and

promotes opportunities for the use of rail, where such ports are connected to the rail network. There is therefore an increased potential for the role of rail freight to and from ports in addition to road transport.

Ease of accessibility to port access should therefore be an important consideration. The RSES seeks to protect and enhance global connectivity and regional accessibility, including the Trans European TEN-T road, rail and port network. It is noted that it is an EU TEN-T objective to link core EU airports (Dublin Airport being one) with the core national rail network, the Dublin-Belfast line forming part of this core rail network. The proposed Rail Freight Strategy therefore, needs to ensure, that cross-border flows are effective. It is essential that accessibility to cross border flows are both effective and resilient.

The Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor is identified in the EMRA RSES as a regional growth enabler. The corridor is also the national entry point to the island through its airports and ports. The RSES also supports the development of the Eastern Corridor through the development of the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor and to strengthen economic links with the South-East, extending to Rosslare Europort which is an important economic and transport link, and this will include public transport connectivity and optimising the potential for rail freight. Cross border co-ordination is a significant element of the RSES and will be even more so with the onset of Brexit, playing a critical role in supporting economic growth and effectiveness.

The role of rail freight to support the Region's Economic Strategy through increased exports and the efficient movement of goods across Ireland should also be emphasised, in particular its role in assisting businesses of all sizes to grow existing markets and explore new ones, in particular SMEs. In the UK, the provider Network Rail are seeking to develop more opportunities to create a mutual partnership with SMEs and a similar approach could be applied here.

Environmental considerations are also important as sustainable transport systems (people and freight) is a primary area of transition highlighted within the RSES along with sustainable development patterns, carbon storing, energy efficient buildings and industry, and renewable energy.

Q5. Are there specific actions which you would like to see incorporated in the rail freight strategy?

Actions that support innovations in the freight handling and transport sector potential for electrification, lower carbon fuels and technology, in collaboration with relevant stakeholders.

Actions that support effective and accessible cross border flows.

Actions that support rail freight services and facilities including rail freight links to the ports.

Actions that promote rail freight as a realistic alternative to road haulage, emphasising the environmental benefits through reduction of emissions and noise with data to back this up e.g. how many HGVs does a freight train remove from the road, reduction of CO2 % etc.

Actions that promote the benefits of using rail through targeted information campaigns.

Actions that provide ease of access to information to help current and potential rail freight users plan their logistics needs.

Actions that support enterprise growth particularly around SMEs.

Q6. Are there any other issues concerning rail freight which you would like to raise?

The Strategy should consider if there would there be an impact on commuter services due to an increase in rail freight use on the national rail network, and what improvements to rail infrastructure will be considered as part of the strategy.

Conclusion

The Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly welcome the opportunity to comment at the outset of this Strategy and we are available for further engagement as the Strategy is developed.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'J' and 'C' with a horizontal line extending from the top of the 'J'.

Jim Conway

Director

Eastern and Midland Regional Assembly

22nd July, 2020